$\underline{\text{Where the Wild Thyme Blows}}$

by

Some Muggle

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTH WALES - HILLSIDE - DAY

A rugged valley stretches towards distant mountains. A village lays nestled in the basin below.

CALEB, 9, a thin scrap of mischief, idles through a meadow swiping at wild-flowers with a stick.

He pauses to stare at a row of ramshackle stone cottages up ahead. One stands out from the rest. Its walls and roof still largely intact.

EXT. MINER'S COTTAGE - DAY

Caleb peers in through a window -- the frame cracked and splintered, the glass long gone.

INT. MINER'S COTTAGE - LIVING AREA - DAY

Weeds poke through floorboards. Cupboards sit dust filled, doors missing. A brick fire-place, blackened by use.

Caleb wanders through the room, his eyes searching.

In a far corner of the room the floorboards have been pried up to expose a patch of dirt beneath.

Caleb studies the patch -- a scrap of cloth pokes through.

Crouching, he pulls the cloth free. It unfurls to reveal itself as a neckerchief.

TUNK. He looks down to find a small, dull colored object attached to a thin chain has fallen from the folds.

He holds it up to the light, rubs the grime away to expose a metallic sheen beneath. It's a locket. He grins.

Caleb continues through the cottage into a

BACK-ROOM

A closed door stands off to one side.

Caleb gives it a tentative nudge with the stick. It opens slightly only to wedge on the uneven floor.

Caleb peers through the gap to see the head of a rotted mattress on an iron frame. He runs his eyes to the foot of the bed to a find a dark shape hunched there...

His eyes go wide.

A MINER dressed in a wool coat and flat cap perches at the end of the bed, his head bowed as if in grief.

Slowly the Miner raises his head towards the door...

Caleb's stick clunks to the floor.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

A CRY of anger follows Caleb as he races breathlessly away from the cottage.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

A pair of roses stand in a vase upon a windowsill. One firm and fresh, the other bruised and wilted.

MARIE PENNIFOLD, 70s, sad, lonely eyes, a wool hat struggles to contain her shock of grey hair.

She stares at the flowers with a troubled frown.

Her eyes drift to the window to see Caleb tear along the pavement and disappear into a house further down.

Marie's face wrinkles in thought.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Plants and flowers adorn every corner of the room.

The faint RINGING of bells rouses Marie from her sleep.

She raises her eye-mask to see a CAT peering from the window. Its tail flicking, alert.

EXT. MARIE'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

Church bells peal in the distance.

Marie exits her house. She draws a night-gown around her and joins a handful of RESIDENTS standing in the road. A mixture of irritation and bemusement on their sleepy faces.

She stops beside PAMELA, 40s, dour, and VIC, 70s, stooped.

PAMELA

It's not St. Barts, wrong end of town for St. Barts.

VIC

Coming from the hills. The old colliery chapel bells.

PAMELA

Chapel's long gone, you've the drink inside you, you old fool--

VIC

I'm sober as a stone. I was born to those bells.

He turns to Marie.

VIC

Marie, tell the youngun' here.

Marie seems to gaze right through them. She finds a face in the crowd -- Caleb.

Their eyes meet across the space. Caleb looks sheepishly away and retreats towards his house.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - BUS SHELTER - DAY

A bus draws to a halt beside a small rain shelter.

The doors SWISH open and Marie shuffles out with the aid of a walking stick.

She pauses at the roadside, her eyes raised to the row of abandoned cottages on the hillside above.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Marie picks her way through the meadow.

She stops. Her hand tightens on the walking stick as CRIES of anguish drift from the cottages ahead.

Worry finds her face. She removes a small pouch from around her neck.

She kneels, gathering handfuls of a small, lilac plant (wild Thyme) which she stuffs inside the pouch.

EXT. ABANDONED COTTAGES - DAY

The CRIES come from within the last cottage. The words unintelligible, edged with madness.

Marie tightens her resolve and pushes on past the ruins.

INT. MINER'S COTTAGE - LIVING AREA - DAY

Marie pauses in the doorway. Heavy SOBS sound from the back-room. She takes a tentative step inside.

She creeps forward, following a trail of child-size shoe prints across the floor to where the neckerchief lays crumpled beside the hole.

A CRASH from the back-room.

Marie presses flat to the interior wall. She clutches the pouch as she looks to the doorway beside her.

A heavy, agitated BREATHING as if somebody were stood there -- just out of sight.

FOOTSTEPS withdraw from the doorway. Marie steels herself.

Marie crouches in the corner. She plucks something from the dirt and holds it up -- a wad of chewing gum.

EXT. VILLAGE PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Caleb sits on a swing. He tears the wrapper from a stick of gum and tosses it away.

The wrapper tumbles with the wind -- until the end of walking stick pins it to the ground.

Caleb thumbs his mobile phone.

MARIE

Did you lose something child?

Caleb startles. He turns to find Marie close behind him. She holds out the gum wrapper.

CALEB

No.

MARIE

Are you sure?

CALEB

Yeah.

MARIE

Perhaps then you found something?

She moves around in front of him. Caleb keeps a wary eye on the walking stick.

MARIE

A small shiny thing... the kind of small shiny thing that doesn't belong in the claws of a young magpie like yourself.

She stops and holds his nervous eyes with an intensity that belies her years.

CALEB

Ain't found nothin'.

MARIE

Are you sure? Only, I fear I may not be the last to come looking.

He draws back on the seat, as if to swing forward.

CALEB

You're in my way.

Marie straightens.

CALEB

You gonna hit me?

MARIE

I'm far too worn to be chasing you round and round with this here stick.

Caleb pulls his feet up -- Marie only just manages step aside as he swings past.

CALEB

Then piss off you bag.

She stands brooding as he arcs back and forth.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

TICK-TOCK-TICK... The pendulum of a wall clock oscillates.

A pot bubbles over the stove.

The curtains drawn. Marie sits at a table in the scant light. In front of her rests a steaming bowl of dark liquid, surrounded by five unlit candles.

She drops the wad of gum into the bowl.

EXT. VILLAGE PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Caleb grips the handrail of a roundabout (merry-go-round), leaning his body out at arms length as it spins.

Two BOYS, both 6, watch as he hangs first by one arm then the other, alternating hands as he goes.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marie mouths silently to herself, eyes closed. She circles a palm over the bowl, round and round...

A flame flickers into life on one of the candles.

EXT. VILLAGE PARK - ROUNDABOUT - DAY

Caleb grins and holds on. The Kids' faces flash past as the roundabout gathers speed.

A flash of hands, strong, adult -- they grasp the bars and spin the roundabout faster. Caleb pulls himself tight to the handrail at this sudden kick of speed.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marie's hand continues to circle, building momentum. The liquid beneath swirls in unison.

One by one the rest of the candles light.

EXT. VILLAGE PARK - ROUNDABOUT - DAY

Caleb holds on for dear life. He watches in terror as the coal-blackened faces of MINERS flash past him. Their cold, dead eyes looking through him as they send the roundabout faster and faster...

Caleb cries out.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marie stops. The candles snuff out. The liquid slows.

EXT. VILLAGE PARK - PLAYGROUND - DAY

The Kids stare blankly as the roundabout eases to a halt. Caleb clutches the handrail, ashen.

Caleb takes off in a disorientated arc across the grass.

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marie sits at the table. Her eyes shift towards the

HALLWAY

The letterbox rattles open. The locket drops to the floor. A patter of FOOTSTEPS recede.

KITCHEN

Marie looks to the Cat with a faint smile.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - BUS SHELTER - DAY

The bus pulls away to reveal Marie at the roadside holding a shovel.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Marie labors her way towards the cottages.

INT. MINER'S COTTAGE - LIVING AREA - DAY

Marie stands in the doorway. Her eyes wander the room, unnerved by the silence.

Floorboards CREAK as she makes her way towards the corner.

A CRASH from the back-room.

Marie stops. Her hand grips the pouch. She stares straight ahead, her fear barely concealed.

Beside her stands the Miner, his face inches away, twisted into a seething snarl.

He's in his early 20s, though he looks older. His features pale and drawn. Eyes cold and dead.

A sadness washes over Marie. She takes a calming breath and continues forward. The Miner watches her go.

The shovel plunges into the dirt.

LATER

Kneeling, Marie places the locket inside the neckerchief.

She hesitates, closes her eyes a moment before popping it open. She smiles sadly at what she sees.

The Miner haunts the shadows behind her, subdued.

Marie gently places the folded neckerchief inside the hole.

MARIE

Sleep well my love.

She tosses a handful of loose dirt in after it before taking up the shovel.

EXT. MINER'S COTTAGE - DAY

Marie moves away from the cottage. Behind her the Miner lingers in the doorway a moment before fading into shadow.

INT. BUS SHELTER - DAY

Caleb sits playing with his phone. He looks up as a shadow falls over him.

Marie stands in the entrance, hood up, shovel in hand.

Caleb blinks -- his young nightmares realised.

Marie takes a seat beside him. They sit in awkward silence for a long moment.

She peers over at his phone -- their eyes meet.

MARIE (V.O.)

He was just a boy too, little more than you...

INT. MARIE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

A yellowed newspaper clipping bears the headline 'BELLS TOLL FOR MINERS KILLED IN PIT TRAGEDY'. It's illustrated with a grainy, black and white picture of a colliery.

Caleb sits on a sofa beside Marie. An open photo album in his lap.

MARIE (CONT'D)

The spark of life was in his eyes. In his every song and breath... He always was a light sleeper mind.

Caleb flips the page.

CALEB

Was that you both?

INSERT: PHOTOGRAPH

A monochrome of Marie, late teens. Beside her stands the Miner. He wears a broad smile, a neckerchief around his throat -- she clasps the locket to hers as she gazes lovingly up into his eyes.

BACK TO SCENE

Marie nods. A bittersweet smile finds her lips.

On the windowsill behind them, the roses stand tall and fresh.